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THE REIGN

OF

PUBLIC OPINION:

OR THE

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE POPULAR WILL TRIUMPHING OVER LAW;

BEING

THE SUBSTANCE OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED ON THE DAY OF ANNUAL FAST, 1837,

IN BOWDOIN STREET CHURCH, BOSTON.

By J. U. PARSONS.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY WHIPPLE & DAMRELL,
No. 9 Cornhill.
NEW YORK:—SCOFIELD AND VOORHIES,
No. 118 Nassau Street.

1837.

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PREFACE.

THE author of this discourse is not, technically, an abolitionist. It was not prepared at the instigation of any society or body of men whatever, but solely from the author's deep conviction of hazard to the community, from the REIGN which it condemns. It aims to defend no specific class of citizens; but to develop the fundamental principle upon which the defence of all classes depends.

We have too long slumbered over the spirit of insubordination, and suffered it to shake the very pillars of the republic. Unless a redeeming spirit shall go forth,—a spirit of resistless energy, and uncompromis-

sing adherence to law, embodying the vigor of every virtuous patriot,—no power can save us from ultimate disorganization. Insubordination is, *in its nature*, INSURRECTION; nothing, but the *necessity* of REVOLUTION can justify it. Are those who *abet* this spirit, prepared for its RESULTS?

BOSTON, APRIL, 1837.

THE REIGN OF PUBLIC OPINION.

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

"SOME, THEREFORE, CRIED ONE THING, AND SOME ANOTHER; FOR THE ASSEMBLY WAS CONFUSED; AND THE MORE PART KNEW NOT WHEREFORE THEY WERE COME TOGETHER."—*Acts* 19: 32.

THE ingenuity of man is strikingly displayed, in the facility with which he can clothe himself with preëminence, wherever in the scale of subordination he may be placed; and arrogate to himself the honor and glory of independence, due only to the whole sovereign people, of whom he constitutes

an invisibly small fraction. It is also quite amusing, to observe the complacency with which a few of these invisible fractions assemble together and deliberate, make speeches, pass resolutions, and proclaim their decisions as the "SENTIMENT OF THE COMMUNITY,—UNQUESTIONABLE PUBLIC OPINION," infinitely more sacred than the decisions of national councils or constitutions; and forming the supreme law of the land.

When, however, those whose names are known to the world, and whose influence is felt, assume this attitude, amusement gives place to serious apprehension and alarm. Station gives the color of patriotism to a spirit of insubordination. What would be passed by with contempt, or branded as treacherous in meaner men, becomes a bold and fearless stand for the defence of the community against wrongs and

outrages, of which the law cannot take cognizance; and such honorable men are able to sustain their position, by enlisting a heedless multitude to execute their purposes.

We have received a foretaste of the blessedness to be enjoyed under the reign of SUCH A PUBLIC OPINION. Before, however, we throw ourselves entirely into its arms, and constitute it the guardian of our rights, it may be well to examine its character and achievements in other ages and in other lands.

To form a basis for correct calculation, let us first examine the records of the word of God, with a glance at profane history; and, secondly, deduce such general principles as are plainly supported by such examination.

It will be understood, that we are to analyze,—not the midnight broil,—the

sewer of public depravity, in which base passions stimulate the combatants to mutual deeds of violence and blood, —but those more dignified and regularly organized proceedings, which aim either to remove some nuisance, such as a gambling house, or some other horde of villains, or to wrest the guilty from the arm of justice, and prevent, or anticipate its proper sanction, or to hinder in others the exercise of vested rights, by directing against them the current of popular fury. These movements must also be carefully distinguished from that effort, put forth by an oppressed community, to throw off the yoke of tyranny, and free themselves from the grasp of usurpers.

CHAPTER II.

ORIGIN OF RIOTOUS PROCEEDINGS.

THE origin of riotous proceedings, lies not so much in collision of opinion with opinion, or of principle with principle, as of opinion with INTEREST or PASSION. The craft must be endangered, or influence with the people undermined, before *opinions* assume importance enough to call for the interposition of this new power. Lot may live in peace even in Sodom, and enjoy his own opinions, notwithstanding universal custom and usage were against him, until his principles obstruct the *wishes* of his fellow-citizens. It matters not how strenuously Paul may

preach at Philippi, till some one's "hope of gain" is gone. Naboth may enjoy his vineyard unmolested, till the eye of royal covetousness is fixed upon it.

When sentiments are promulgated, which tend to injure the personal interest or ruling passion of the heart, the foundation is laid for that holy alliance, which is to constitute and wield PUBLIC OPINION against them.

CHAPTER III.

THE COMPONENT PARTS OF A RIOT.

THE component parts of a riot are usually four:—the instigators,—the operatives,—the constituted authorities,—and the sufferers.

1. THE INSTIGATORS. In the riot so graphically described in the quotation at the commencement of these remarks, the silversmiths performed this important part. When they crucified the Lord of glory, the scribes and Pharisees were the movers. When the apostles were imprisoned, the "high priest, captain of the temple, and chief priests" led the way. When Stephen was murdered, "certain of the synagogue

of the libertines" conducted the sham prosecution. When Paul and Barnabas were driven from Antioch, it was by the influence of "the devout and honorable women and the chief men of the city," stirred up by the Jews. From Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, Thessalonica and Berea, they were also driven away by the influence of unbelieving Jews. At Philippi, the priests of a heathen oracle, whose impositions Paul and Silas detected and defeated, took the law into their own hands. At Jerusalem, Paul was torn from the temple, where he was orderly performing a vow, at the instigation of certain Jews from Asia, who had entered it for the same purpose. Afterwards, the chief priests entered into a base conspiracy with forty reckless vagabonds to destroy him.

From this brief review, it will be observed, that the instigators of riots

were usually *men of wealth, influence and distinction in society,—not uncommonly of high repute for piety and learning, and in high offices of honor and trust.*

2. THE OPERATIVES. These are the populace. Among them, the more part know not wherefore they engage in it. They have no particular opinion of their own,—ignorant, unstable, parasitical,—men who commit their consciences to their betters for safe keeping, and lay their clothes at the feet of Saul. Many of them are sincere and honest in their purpose, but mistaken in the nature of their undertaking; they join in the maniac shout, almost unconscious of the tone which it assumes. To-day, they strow the path before the Savior with tokens of homage, and cry "Hosanna!" To-mor-

row, under the influence of sagacious priests and designing rulers, they exclaim, "Away with him! Crucify him!"

Another class are those who follow the impulse of their own vile passions,—who feast in the midnight broil, regardless of all right, all interest, all principle;—who prowl through the streets, and howl and strike, defame and curse,—divested of the honorable magnanimity of the lion,—who crawls from his covert only at the promptings of hunger, and suffers the defenceless kid to pass him unmolested, when that demand is satisfied,—and wedded to the malignant savageness of the growling hyena, which tears the innocent for pleasure, and robs the sepulchre for sport. Happily for the world, the number of those who have thus cast off all restraint,—who puff at the pub-

lic will, and scoff at the judgments of God, and who have escaped from the last vestige of self-respect,—is always small. The reign of anarchy,—the jubilee of Pandemonium,—has begun wherever they abound.

3. A *third party* to every riotous procedure is the CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES. They have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Law is made for the lawless; and officers are appointed to execute it, not upon the orderly, but disorderly; not upon a solitary offender, merely, but upon any and every combination for illegal purposes. CIVIL OFFICERS, THEREFORE, CANNOT ESCAPE BEING A PARTY TO EVERY RIOTOUS PROCEDURE WITHIN THEIR JURISDICTION AND KNOWLEDGE. To the evil which they suffer to be done, a righteous God and a bleeding community will

hold them ACCESSORY. They may find it convenient to be absent; but they cannot divest themselves of the trust committed to them by a confiding public. They may conceal themselves from the noise and uproar, while innocent citizens are despoiled of their property and rights, and hunted from house to house and street to street; but to hide from their accountability to the genius of free institutions they cannot.

The part enacted by magistrates in the riotous proceedings recorded in the Bible is various. In some cases, they were themselves the instigators. This was the fact when riots originated with the priests and elders among the Jews, and the penalty they wished to inflict did not transcend their authority. When they would crucify the Savior, they were obliged to resort to the Roman tetrarch.

The part which that governor performed has covered his name with infamy, infinitely deeper than the cruelty with which he mingled the blood of the worshipper with his sacrifice at the altar. We hardly know which most to despise, the malignity of the persecutor, or the mean, cringing subserviency of the governor. Thrice he averred, "I find no fault in this man;" and thrice decided, "I will therefore chastise him, and let him go;"—and then, at the bare suggestion, that it would be unpopular with Cesar, "delivered him to be crucified." How could he bear the scrutiny of the Savior's eye, as he returned for the last time, and said, "I can avail nothing, but rather a tumult is made. Your doctrines are exceedingly offensive to the public, and they are highly exasperated; I am unable to protect you,

unless you desist from these exciting discourses; and must, therefore, give you up to their will." Of what avail were his ablutions,—his protestations of the innocence of the victim,—when he refuses to exercise the only power which could save him from crucifixion. He might be required, at their desire, to release the guilty, according to their custom; but no custom could shield him from guilt, in delivering the innocent to be murdered.

Let it not be said, he was unable to oppose the current. One of his captains, afterwards breasted it all, and rescued Paul from its fury, when the same populace raised the same cry of "Away with him," and when he was borne upon the shoulders of his men, for the violence of the multitude.

Gallio seems to have been allied to Pilate in spirit, suffering rioters to beat

and abuse innocent citizens before his face, in the judgment hall, without censure or indictment.

In the riot at Ephesus, there was more promptness on the part of the government; and after a long period of crazy shouting, the rioters were dispersed.

At Antioch, the magistrates rent off their clothes, and entered into the violent agitations of the mob. The chief captain and Gamaliel are the only persons on record, who appear to have discharged their duty, as military and civil officers, under such circumstances.

4. The fourth party in these transactions is the SUFFERERS. These are *immediate* and *remote*. The immediate sufferers receive the stroke in their persons or personal interests; and it would be sufficiently painful, to contemplate

their injuries alone. Look at that object of popular vengeance, borne along by the violence of the crowd! There is no malice in his heart,—no guile in his lips,—no murderous purpose in his life. Why do they hurry him on, with taunts and sneers, curses and blasphemy? Hark! that maniac shout, "Away with such a fellow from the earth!" What has he done? Preached, through Christ, the resurrection of the dead. See them push him along without the walls, and mingle their curses with volleys of stones. He falls a helpless victim of popular fury. What is his crime? He expressed a sentiment which outraged the voice of public opinion,—the sentiment, that God will raise the dead!

But the evils inflicted on the immediate sufferers are trifling, compared with the *remote consequences*. These

affect the whole community where such practices exist. When Stephen dies, Christianity bleeds; and the disciples are every where scattered abroad. When the Son of God is crucified, the earth trembles, and ANATHEMA is written upon a nation. When Naboth dies, justice has left the land, and "equity cannot enter." No man's vineyard, or oliveyard, or person, is safe, if malice, or covetousness, or envy, or voluptuousness require his sacrifice.

So in every age and nation. Right expires, when brutal force prevails. Rome falls, when the voluptuous tyrant and obsequious mob force the senate from their chamber, and immure the wise and incorruptible in dungeons, or administer to them the fatal hemlock. Civil liberty expires in England, when her claims must be discussed at the point of the bayonet. Science groans

and dies, and the stars are veiled in sackcloth, when Galileo answers for the impious and heaven-daring opinion, that the world is not the centre of the universe,—an opinion so contrary to the received doctrine of all ages,—by the forfeiture of his life.

Especially, in such a government as ours, when one member of the community suffers, do all the members suffer with it. Let it not be supposed, that popular indignation will be limited to any individuals, or any specific topic. If the tribunal is once established, it will extend its arms, till it embraces in its jurisdiction, every civil, social, moral and religious institution, and we must eat our bread by its measure,—rise, and sleep, and worship, according to its mandate.

CHAPTER IV.

SPIRIT AND MOTIVES FROM WHICH RIOTS PROCEED, AND BY WHICH THEY ARE GOVERNED.

On this point, it will be profitable to look upon the outside, and the inside of the cup.

1. The outside is quite clean. That is, the ostensible object is highly disinterested. The instigators would have us believe, that a *love of country*, a regard for order, a spirit of philanthropy, and may be a surprising zeal for religion has compelled them, reluctantly, to enter upon the disagreeable business, —an ardor so stimulating, that they cannot wait the operation of judicial

process, but feel constrained to prevent the ordinary operation of law.

A superficial observer in the council chamber of the great Sanhedrim, where the Savior was arraigned, probably would have discerned the workings of no other passion in his persecutors. "He has blasphemed God, and committed treason against the institutions and religion of his country," they exclaim, with solemn protestations of regard for both. "We have heard him say that he would destroy this holy place."—Here is testimony of his guilt in the highest misdemeanor against God and man. When he was brought before the Roman governor, they are equally disinterested in pleading for his acquiescence in their murderous purpose. "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him unto thee. He has spoken against Cesar,

proclaiming himself a king, and stirs up the people to sedition against the tribute-money." They have no less attachment to the Roman yoke than to the temple of their fathers, and the honor of their blasphemed God. Who could withhold his acquiescence in the indignant cry of the people, "Crucify him?" Who could dissent from the opinion of the multitude, that he who had committed murder, in an insurrection, was more worthy of their sympathy, than one who had added treason and blasphemy to his seditious discourses?

The same charges were alleged in vindication of the riot against Stephen. "He ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law." The priests of divination at Philippi, were not behind their compeers in patriotism. "These men,"—

they cry, in their argument against Paul and Silas, before the magistrates,—"these men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans." The Thessalonians were equally patriotic, professing an anxiety for the "decrees of Cesar," which would not suffer them to rest, while men would walk contrary to them.

At Ephesus, the silversmiths were seized with sudden devotion to Diana, when the great goddess was in danger of being "despised and her magnificence destroyed."

The record of unlawful assemblies, of all ages, with few exceptions, sustains the same exterior. It is liberty against tyranny on the one hand, or licentiousness on the other,—moderation against extravagance and radicalism,—liberal-

ism against bigotry,—public opinion,—sovereign, indomitable, unquestionable public opinion against aggression,—antiquity against innovation,—positive, long conceded, and acknowledged custom or law against modern theories and inventions of men.

Nothing could be accomplished, except among the most barbarous nations, without such a show of justice and propriety. Even Jezebel, the mother of abominations, would not risk her reputation with the people, in the destruction of Naboth, without suborning men, who should accuse him of the most flagitious crimes; and the Sodomites did not proceed to violence with Lot, till he violated law,—the law of lust,—and condemned the mandates of Sodomish public opinion. "This one fellow came in to sojourn with us, and he will needs be a judge." There is

regard enough, in the most dissolute community, for individual rights, to preserve them from violent assault, unless masked under some specious garb.

Let us now look at "*that which is within.*" Into the sanctuary of the heart we would not dare to enter, if he who knows it all had not thrown open its secret recesses for our inspection. He has placed it in the focus of the concentrated light of his word, that its character and workings may be developed.

What, then, was the secret spring of that espionage exercised by the scribes and Pharisees over our Lord? Why do they frequent his assemblies? Why do they watch his discourses? Why do they send out their spies, to catch him in his words? Why do they propound to him the most difficult ques-

tions, and bring before him, and professedly submit to his decision, the most difficult cases in religious casuistry? Did they doubt his integrity? How often had he silenced and disarmed them, by the stern and unquestionable rebuke of his eye! "Why," said they to the emissaries whom they had sent to apprehend him,—"why have ye not brought him?" "Never man spake like this man."

The whole problem is solved by the evangelists;—"*for* ENVY *they had delivered him.*" They envied his superior virtue,—his heaven-like benevolence,—his works of love,—his favor with the people,—and therefore sought his destruction. The same motives guided and animated their hostility to his disciples; and nothing but the fear of going beyond the line to which popular favor would accompany them, prevent-

ed an earlier sacrifice of the Master and his servants. "They feared the people, lest they should be stoned."

In other instances, *avarice* was the true cause of irritation. Such was the case with Ahab, and the fortune tellers at Philippi. Demetrius was infinitely more concerned for the SILVER SHRINES of Diana, than for her divinity or worship. All the illegal proceedings recorded in the Bible may be traced, directly, to *some selfish passion in the heart of those who excited them.*

The motives of those *who engage in the execution of the outrage* have been alluded to. Many are deceived in regard to the character and tendency of their conduct. Others are the mere tools of their superiors. Others still partake of their spirit, and enter the chase as curs that love the game. As a general thing, however, their voice is

but an echo: what they have been told in secret, they proclaim in the street. What they have heard whispered in the ear in closets, they trumpet to the winds.

The *motives of magistrates*, who shrunk from the faithful discharge of official duty, were similar in their selfish character to those which influenced the instigators. In some instances, their personal interest was molested. In others, a fear of losing popularity, or the desire of courting popular favor, was a sufficient inducement to lead to the most flagitious violation of their public trust. Pilate is frightened from his purpose of releasing the Savior, by one short appeal to his love of office; "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend." "Herod the king stretched forth his hand and vexed certain of the church, and killed James

with the sword. *And because he saw that it pleased the Jews*, he proceeded farther to take Peter also." John the Baptist fell a prey to revenge, for his faithfulness in admonishing Herod of his sins. It is worthy of remark, that in no instance can an honorable motive be credited to Jewish or Roman magistrates, when they allowed violence to supersede justice; and in no instance, where they made bold and decided resistance to the claims of the populace, did they fail of protecting the innocent, and preserving order.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A POPULAR TRIBUNAL

THESE are most graphically described by the sacred writer.

1. DISCORD. "Some cried one thing and some another." There is no standard of right,—no principles; every one's caprice is his own criterion of judgment.

2. CONSEQUENT CONFUSION. Confusion in the council, and confusion in the execution. Some throw dust in the air; some rend off their garments, —their assembly resembles the sound of many thunders uttering their voices.

3. Noise. Senseless, idiotic uproar. There is *meaning* in the *savage yell*,—the solemn powow,—or the vindictive war-whoop,—and even in the hiss of the serpent, and of the silly goose,—but the hiss, and taunt, and out-cry of the mob is *without an object, and without a name.*

4. Ignorance. "The more part knew not wherefore they were come together." Yet they could join for hours in the shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" They individually contribute to swell the loud chorus, and excite each other's wonder. Ignorant of any specific cause for this excitement, they suppose there must be some important reason; and are ready to believe every floating rumor, borne upon the wind, however incredible it may be.

5. UNCONTROLLABLE PASSION. The scenes in which they mingle are calculated to break down every restraint, and throw off all sense of responsibility to God and man. They are incapacitated to inquire into any man's character or deserts, and rush on to unrestrained and lawless depredation.

6. HEEDLESS IMPETUOSITY. They seize their victim, and convict, condemn, immure, or execute him in a single day. They rush from the street to the Sanhedrim, and from the Sanhedrim to the Hall of Judgment, and from the Hall of Judgment to Calvary, without a moment's pause. They allow no time for defence; no time for calm deliberation or impartial judgment.

These are the SANCTIFIED ELEMENTS, *combined in the riotous assembly, to administer justice, and protect the peace and happiness of the community!*

CHAPTER VI.

CONNEXION BETWEEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS SPIRIT, AND THE STABILITY OF RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL INSTITUTIONS.

The Jewish history is connected with many affecting and instructive incidents, worthy of careful observation. How often, when a spirit of insubordination prevailed, were they given up to their enemies! When Elijah would accuse them to God, as most wicked, he says, "They have digged down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword." When Christ would exhibit the most convincing evidence of national depravity, he says, "Ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the

prophets." From all former defections, however, they had measurably recovered, and preserved their national existence. But at the advent of Christ, the tide of public integrity appears to have reached its lowest ebb;—the mob *obtained the ascendency*,—magistrates and governors were awed into submission by their menaces. Their streets ran with innocent blood. It was the death struggle of a most noble national economy,—one which was formed after the pattern shown in the mount, and which had survived convulsions, that overwhelmed all surrounding nations in total oblivion. But now the deadly grasp of disorganization was laid upon it,—murderers were its priests and counsellors,—and the mortification advanced with ominous rapidity, till the whole strength of the nation was gathered to the devoted city of Jerusalem,

like the life-blood retreating to its citadel, and prostrated by the perfecting of that furious spirit of internal hostility, which had been abroad in the land. How appallingly did they realize the fulfilment of their imprecation, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

The prevalence of unlawful assemblies, to such an extent as to ABASH CIVIL AUTHORITIES, *has been, in every age, an indication of decay, which cannot be repaired.* It is a symptom of debility in the social compact, which it cannot long survive, and at the same time, *in itself*, an aggravation of the disease, and its most malignant development.

Rome is no longer mistress of the world, when her citizens turn their swords at each others' breasts. She soon becomes a prey, meet for the hordes of northern barbarians. The

gory streets and Tuilleries of Paris will not soon be forgotten. All history is unanimous in the testimony, that no community can long survive, when the strong arm of the law is defied by irresponsible and self-constituted guardians of the people's rights. The descent to unbridled licentiousness is rapid and easy; and the transition from that to tyranny or anarchy equally natural and sure. It only requires some Marat, or Robespierre, to give concentration to the agitated elements, and the work will be accomplished.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED.

From the foregoing observations, we may infer the following principles:

1. *It is never safe or right, but attended with imminent danger, to resort to unlawful measures to effect any purpose, whether right or wrong in itself.* We may be exposed to evils from the imperfect constitution of society; but we had better endure them, than countenance, in the least degree, a spirit of insubordination. Much as we may deplore the prevalence of Catholic influence, we had better see its institutions

planted upon every high hill, and under every green tree, than have an arm of violence raised to molest it; even though we might be fully persuaded of its secret debauchery and pollution. Better that a whole street should be given up to infamy, than an unlawful finger be raised to disperse its guilty inhabitants. When once the tiger is unchained, no human sagacity can tell where his ravages will cease. The same paw, which seizes and devours the wolf that infests your fold, will then seize the lamb. The device, formed to rid you of a nuisance, will be applied to demolish your property and assault your person.

This principle needs a careful review in the public mind. Many virtuous, honorable and excellent men have felt but little regret, if not a secret satisfaction, in acts of violence which have

been directed to the demolition of a house of infamy or gambling. And it is true, that in their own merits, they have no claim upon the protection or sympathy of the community. They have turned their hand against society, and live by drawing out its life-blood; and, therefore, they have no private claims to regard. But it should never be forgotten, that the PRECEDENT is just as ruinous, as if the assault were committed upon the unoffending; and more provoking to that portion of the community from whom we have reason to anticipate danger. The populace must not be expected to discriminate between the precious and the vile. If they favor any class, it will be those most nearly assimilated to themselves in moral character and principle. If we once depart from the anchorage of the law, we are tossed upon a restless

ocean,—driven by every gust of passion, and at the mercy of every sweeping gale.

2. To be assailed with riots is no evidence of wickedness in the assailed, or of error in his cause, or of want of prudence in its management; neither is it any proof of the reverse. The greatest and best of men have been, in all ages, the subjects of such assaults. No degree of benevolence, philanthropy or patriotism is proof against it. The wisdom of the Son of God and of the Holy Ghost was not sufficient to enable the apostles so to plead the claims of Christianity as to avoid it; because those claims came in direct collision with the selfishness of their enemies; and they were *hated* BECAUSE *they told the truth.*

3. This analysis presents no very flattering aspect to those who are disposed to connive at illegal proceedings, in regard to the *company with which they are associated.* In all the Bible, they have not one respectable man, under whose shadow they may find protection. The vilest hypocrites,—the most malignant persecutors,—unprincipled defamers,—slaves of covetousness or lust,—and dastardly public officers form the company among whom they must take their rank. That there have been exceptions in modern times may be true; but they ARE EXCEPTIONS.

4. The most solemn protestations of regard to the public good, and the cause of humanity or religion are no evidence of the purity and disinterestedness of those who instigate or enact a mob.

The man who has denied the supreme authority of the laws in all cases, is a political atheist; and, in denying the fundamental article of a sound political creed, nullifies all the rest, and becomes unworthy of confidence. *He may be* a patriot, as the atheist may be a man of truth; but there is no guaranty for the veracity of the one, or the political integrity of the other.

5. The highest degree of wealth, rank, influence, office or respectability, can afford no evidence of uprightness among the instigators of riots. These are the very classes whose hands are stained with the blood of prophets, apostles and the Holy One of God.

6. No confidence can be reposed in any measure of this kind, to heal a moral or political malady. The remedy,

—if it should prove a remedy,—is infinitely worse than the disease; and the strong presumption is, that the more vigorously such measures are plied, the more firmly will the cause they are intended to subvert be established. It is wonderful that this lesson has not been learned; and especially, that it should not be observed, that for the last few years, more converts have been made to ultra opinions by the violence of opposers, than by the advocacy of friends.

7. Loud, swelling resolutions of public assemblies are no sure indication of the real will of the people. Shallow streams mutter at every pebble,—deep currents sweep on, noiselessly, but resistlessly.

8. *The operatives are by no means*

the only criminal persons in these transactions.

It is not easy to measure the relative turpitude of different sins; but Christ has given us an indication of his estimate of the different parties engaged in his execution. For the people who had rashly rejected him, and the soldiers who fastened the nails in his hands, he could pray, on the cross, and find an argument to use in prayer: "Father forgive them; *for they know not what they do.*" But, of the instigators, he speaks in terms of unmeasured reprobation. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! How can ye escape the damnation of hell! Fill ye up the measure of your fathers. Behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes. And some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues and persecute them from city to city."

Even the time-serving governor was less criminal than the envious leaders of the mob. It should not, however, be inferred that every delinquent magistrate has the same extenuation with Pilate. He was a foreign officer, whose assent, merely, was required to the decision of the Sanhedrim already given. The officer of justice, who shrinks from the faithful performance of his trust, betrays the confidence which has been reposed in him.

9. When members of government connive at illegal proceedings, or become identified with them, we may write "ICHABOD," on that community. "THE GLORY HAS DEPARTED" will soon be traced in characters of blood. It is of little consequence from what motive this dereliction of duty may proceed. If it is because the personal

or party interests of rulers are identified with such measures, or promoted by them, it indicates a degree of corruption in the government, which no civil polity has long been able to sustain. If it is the result of fear, and apprehension of inability to defend innocent citizens in the exercise of their rights, it argues either alarming imbecility and cowardice in constituted authorities, or SUCH PROGRESS in the spirit of insubordination, as brings all law and right in jeopardy. A little fuller development of the spirit,—a little more success in bidding defiance to law and justice, and its sovereign interdiction will be extended to every provision of civilized society. It will be found contrary to the dictates of *public opinion*, for a few individuals to monopolize the principal wealth of the nation, while the PEOPLE are comparatively poor, and

doomed to servile drudgery. To remove this inequality, so contrary to reason and justice, they will strike for the *levelling system;* and those who now

"Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war,"

to banish radicalism from the earth, will FEEL the blessedness of the tribunal they have erected.

10. The materials for riots exist at all times and in all nations. Disappointed aspirants for office,—envious demagogues,—bigoted opposers of innovation,—or men whose craft is endangered, will always be found willing to excite commotion; and an ignorant, reckless multitude will not be wanting, who can be wrought up into a passion to execute their will.

It is no matter of alarm, that such ele-

ments exist. Danger arises solely from the encouragement which they receive. Volcanic fires are *always burning* UNDER OUR FEET; they are only to be dreaded, when they gather to such violence as to shake the solid foundations upon which we stand, and burst forth in fearful explosions, pouring their scorching lava down UPON OUR HEADS.

11. Hence, finally, we observe THE SOLEMN DUTY IMPOSED UPON EVERY VIRTUOUS CITIZEN AND PHILANTHROPIST.

We have fallen upon perilous times. The fires which have been burning under us begin to mutter their thunders. Here and there the rumbling earthquake gives ominous presage of a tremendous eruption approaching. Innocent, unoffending citizens are seized, —not within sight of the American

coast, but in the bosom of the American people,—in the heart of that community, which boasts of being an asylum for the oppressed,—innocent citizens, irreproachable in character and unquestionable in principle, are arrested by the populace,—tried,—*condemned*, SCOURGED, —and not a voice is raised in their defence,—no process instituted, to call in question the supreme tribunal,—the popular frenzy by which they have been insulted. Whole classes of men are disfranchised,—divested of the chartered right of peaceably assembling to deliberate on the welfare of their country and their fellow-men. Heads of important departments of our national government are not prepared to decide, whether it is proper to lance the jugular vein of the circulating system of the community, and draw off all its health-

ful tide to reduce the inflammation and soften the wiry pulse.*

At such a crisis, let us,

I. KNOW NO PARTY IN POLITICS, BUT STRICT AND BOLD DEFENDERS OF THE SUPREMACY OF THE LAW. The bone and sinew of the nation have too long stood in silence, and permitted magistrates to be awed by a show of power gathered around the worst of all RADICALS, the RADICALIST of REVOLUTION.

They must be permitted to see, that their defence is sure, in the sober and substantial voice of the great body of the community.

II. Let us avoid, as far as possible, in our language and measures, giving

* Perhaps the Hon. P. M. General, is *prepared*, by this time, to settle the question. He has witnessed long enough the effect of indecision, to test the "experiment."

any occasion of excitement, to those who seek occasion.

III. Let us abstain from every thing, that can be so construed as to give countenance to such proceedings, however plausible the pretence.

The wisest counsel ever given on such an occasion, was that of Gamaliel; "Refrain from these men and let them alone. For if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Whatever may be done, which the provisions of the statute will not reach, "let it alone;" if it be in accordance with the principles of eternal truth and justice, we cannot overthrow it; if not, it will receive its doom.

IV. Let us fearlessly and steadfastly abide by the dictates of our own consciences, regardless of the demands of a lawless populace. We can never sufficiently admire the moral courage of the apostles and prophets, when brought into collision with the almost unanimous decision of public opinion, endorsed by the power, and wealth, and learning of the nation;—"WHETHER IT BE RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF GOD TO HEARKEN UNTO YOU, MORE THAN UNTO GOD, JUDGE YE." "They departed from the council, rejoicing that they were permitted to suffer shame, for his name." When brought out of prison, they enter into the temple and renew their discussion. They wait for no excitement to subside; they administer no sedative to public opinion. Aware that the hostility was not against them,

or their mode of speaking, but against their cause, they obey God rather than men.

It is treachery to the claims of bleeding justice, to yield a step to the pressure of brute force. The least concession is like the letting out of waters. The conflict must be sustained at the threshold.

V. Let us, moreover, earnestly contend for this right, in defence of every fellow-citizen; however his opinions may differ from our own. Though we may deprecate his measures and principles, let us SUFFER NO MOLESTATION of HIS RIGHTS. The lawless must be made to feel the keen rebuke of an injured community. Let us gather around our sanctuaries, and altars, and halls of science, and protect them from violence. Let the question be decided,

whether our civil policy has lost its energy, and is unable to sustain itself.

VI. LET CIVIL MAGISTRATES FEARLESSLY DISCHARGE THEIR DUTY,—DEFEND EVERY CITIZEN IN HIS CHARTERED RIGHTS. You are our highest earthly hope. To you we have committed the defence of our best earthly inheritance. We implore, not mercy but JUSTICE, at your hands. In the name of liberty and country,—in the name of virtue and humanity,—in the name of violated domestic comforts,—in the name of our sons and brothers torn from our embrace,—in the name of that precious boon for which our fathers suffered, we conjure you, arise and save us! Be assured, the immense mass of the virtuous community will sustain the most decisive measures you may adopt for their

defence. And to you will belong the glorious achievement, of breasting the current of disorganization, and turning back the tide of irresponsibility, which is fast undermining our blessed institutions.

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